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586 virtuous, he may divorce her, but in that case he must pay 200 to 300 silver dollars to her father, and very few families can afford such an expensive method of divorce. In such a case the husband would find it less expensive and easier to take a concubine in addition to his wife, who would remain the recognised, but neglected mistress of her husband's home.

595 Concubinage is still perfectly legal, though no longer approved by the younger generation of Chinese of the educated class. Among the Min Chia it has always been the luxury of the rich rather than a general custom. Only a few wealthy men can afford more than one wife, and it is almost unknown for any man to have two concubines. The most common reason for taking a concubine is the failure of the first wife to bear children, or the death of such children as she had borne when there is no longer any hope of her having any others. In such a case it is considered a natural thing for the husband to take a concubine, and indeed the older Min Chia would consider it his duty to do so. Concubines are usually the daughters of poorer families, who having more daughters than they can easily marry to families of their own status, are ready to send one daughter to a richer home in this capacity. There are cases where the concubine is of the same social standing as the first wife, but this is not so common, and is often due to a compromise solution when the husband has eloped with one girl and had to consent to marry the other, to whom he was already betrothed.

Although the concubine is thus usually of lower social status than the first wife, and her position in the home is inferior, her children count as equally legitimate with those of the first wife, and no discrimination is made between them. In peasant households concubinage is unknown, for economic reasons, and if the wife proves barren, it is

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customary to adopt a nephew or a young cousin of a lower generation as heir. Widowers usually re-marry, and a widower is not considered to be an unsuitable bridegroom for a girl, but custom is opposed to the re-marriage of widows, who if they do so, can bring nothing but their own clothes to their new home, and must leave behind everything that they received from their dead husband. In spite of this, widows quite often do marry again, but only if they have no children of their own.

In spite of the real limitations and disabilities which women suffer under this system,[1] they are far from being downtrodden and secluded. When a woman has given birth to children her position in the home is secured, and as she grows older her authority increases. When she becomes the head of the household, after her mother-in-law's death, she is the absolute mistress of the home. Men have very little control over the running of the house. They are not consulted even when it is a question of letting a part of the house to strangers, and the rent is paid to the mother, not the father or the eldest son. They may invite guests to dinner parties, and they can conduct the outside business of the family, though rarely without consulting their wives or mothers. It is often assumed that the hardship of these arranged marriages rests only on the bride, but for the husband, who finds himself married, for life in practice, to a termagant or a spitfire, the home becomes anything but a restful retreat. Many men in these circumstances find escape by engaging in business in some distant city, virtually leaving their homes in the posession of the unloved wife.

In western Yunnan modern medical science is still almost entirely unknown, and the ravages of epidemic diseases proceed virtually unchecked. The doctors who practise old-fashioned Chinese medicine are indeed capable

[1] i.e. the marriage system. --Analyst]